

# Assist Care and Support Support Service

Unit 10  
Waverley Industrial Estate  
Waverley Street  
Bathgate  
EH48 4JA

Telephone: 01506 630 207

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
18 December 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Assist Care & Support Ltd

**Service provider number:**  
SP2018013221

**Service no:**  
CS2018371056

## About the service

Assist Care and Support Ltd is a support service providing care at home services to adults and older adults living in their own homes and in the wider community of West Lothian. The provider recently extended the service to include South Lanarkshire and plans to set up a new team to work in this area.

The service was registered in July 2019 and is a privately owned company. The team consists of care workers and is managed by the registered manager with the support of a coordinator and senior care workers.

At the time of the inspection, there were 55 people receiving a service.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection type which took place on 16 and 17 December 2024. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. An inspection volunteer was also involved. An inspection volunteer is a member of the public who volunteers to work alongside the inspectors. They have a unique experience of either being a person who has used services themselves or being a carer for someone who has used services. The inspection volunteer's role is to speak with people receiving the service and their families, to gather their views.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- received feedback on the service from 18 people using the service and 18 family members
- received feedback from 23 staff and management
- shadowed care workers visiting people in their homes
- observed the staff team meeting
- reviewed documents
- received feedback from seven supporting health and social care professionals.

**Key messages**

- People were very happy with the care and support that they received from Assist Care and Support.
- There were warm and trusting relationships between staff and people receiving a service.
- The management team were supportive and staff worked well together.
- Personal plans and risk assessments would benefit from being more individualised.
- The service had made good progress with providing medication training for staff. Further work would help ensure that people were receiving the right support with taking medication.
- Management oversight could be improved by putting in place a planned approach to quality assurance and self evaluation.

**From this inspection we evaluated this service as:**

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

## How well do we support people's wellbeing?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good. There were several important strengths which taken together impacted positively on outcomes for people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

People were happy with their care and support. They felt respected and were treated with compassion and dignity. We observed warm and kind interactions between staff and people receiving a service. Throughout the inspection, we saw that staff genuinely cared for the people they supported.

We heard a lot of positive feedback from people who received a service and their family members. Some of this feedback included:

"We are extremely happy with Assist Care".

"Staff are very, very good and first class".

"I am happy with the care my [relative] is receiving from the Assist Care and Support team. If I did not have the care team to help me I would not be able to keep my [relative] at home. I cannot praise the team enough for all the care and support they have given to my [relative]. Every one of the team has been so kind and patient, I cannot thank them enough".

"Since Assist Care have taken over [my relative's] care package, [my relative] feels a lot less stressed about carers coming in as all the staff are friendly, polite, respectful and always on time".

'[Named worker] goes over and above and I don't know what I would do without [them]. [They] are always smiling".

Visiting professionals confirmed this. One professional said "The feedback I have received from clients and their families, in relation to the care staff, has always been very positive with comments in relation to their caring and compassionate approach, reliability, ability to form positive and meaningful relationships, and a general sense of being happy to assist with any care needs required".

Staff knew people well and recognised changes in people's health and wellbeing quickly. The team communicated well and worked together to ensure that concerns were escalated. The management team were offering advice and seeking appropriate support when this was required. The service worked with other health and social care professionals to ensure that people's wellbeing was promoted and that their needs were being met in the right way. One health and social care professional reflected on the positive impact of the service. "Assist Care and Support are amazing. They told me once that they treat people receiving care like family. What I hear from people's relatives, this is true. One [person] is thriving at home when the previous care provider said that [they] needed to go into a long term care [home]".

Everyone had a personal plan and moving and handling risk assessment in place. Plans were focussed on care tasks which guided staff in what support people required but there was limited personal information or details of people's preferences. Although staff generally knew people well, there was a risk that new or unfamiliar staff would not have sufficient information to provide personalised care without having to ask the person or their relative how they liked their care to be provided (see area for improvement 1).

The management team were checking with people, and their family members, that they were happy with the care provided and reviewing people's needs. However, a number of reviews were overdue. Where personal plans had been reviewed, there was little change made because of the focus on tasks. We shared resources with the manager and encouraged the service to review people's care and develop personalised plans. The manager was enthusiastic about improving this and we look forward to seeing progress at future inspections (see area for improvement 1).

Where people received support with medication, we observed there was limited information about the type of support required. Staff were supporting people with medication which helped to keep them healthy, however there needed to be greater clarity over when staff were offering assistance and when they were administering medication. This support should be reviewed to protect people and ensure that they are receiving the right support while enabling them to have as much control over their health as possible (see area for improvement 2).

### Areas for improvement

1. To improve the quality of information for staff, the provider should ensure that personal plans and risk assessments are individualised and reviewed on a six monthly basis or more frequently as people's needs change.

This should include, but not limited to, reflecting people's personalities, backgrounds, preferences and wishes. Risk assessments should encompass all risks that are present for people and contain details of how to support, minimise and manage areas of risk.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 3.07).

2. To ensure people receive the right level of support with medication, the provider should review medication procedures and support to ensure this meets people's needs.

This should include, but not be limited to, reviewing with health and social care professionals what level of support people need. When reviews have been carried out, people's personal plans should be updated with details of how to support people with medication.

The service should review procedures to ensure there is clear guidance for staff.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance, and best practice' (HSCS 4.11); and 'I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources' (HSCS 4.27).

### How good is our staff team?

**4 - Good**

We evaluated this key question as good. There were several important strengths which taken together impacted positively on outcomes for people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

People could be confident that there were good recruitment procedures in place. Background checks were completed and all staff were registered with the Scottish Social Services. We discussed with the service how they could enhance recruitment procedures by ensuring references were dated and there were records relating to recruitment decisions.

The service had a full staff team working across different communities in West Lothian. There was respectful communication within the team and this created a warm atmosphere because there were good working relationships. We observed that the team were comfortable sharing their views and listening to each other to ensure they were providing the right care and support to people.

People had small teams of consistent care workers. When staff were absent from work, other members of the wider staff team stepped in to assist to ensure sufficient cover for the service. Staff supported each other and the service was not relying on unknown staff such as agency. This meant that people were comfortable with their carers and were receiving care from staff that knew them well.

During the course of our inspection, we observed staff taking time to provide unrushed and compassionate care and support. There was travel time allowed between visits which was ensuring people received their care at an agreed time. People told us that staff were punctual and they did not feel rushed. We discussed with the manager how they could enhance their monitoring of visits. This would enable them to have a better overview of the quality of service delivery to people and help the management team identify and prioritise areas for improvement.

Staff were confident delivering care due to the training they had received. The service had an induction programme for new staff and annual refresher training to ensure staff were up to date with best practice guidelines. The service was ensuring that staff were equipped to provide good care and support which was informed by best practice.

The management team knew people very well and were providing good leadership to the staff. We heard that the manager was approachable, responsive and supportive. Where concerns or issues were raised, these were dealt with immediately. Health and social care professionals supported this and told us that the manager is "always professional, responsive and accommodating" and "communication is great and they have a 'can do' attitude".

The management team had a good insight into how well the service was providing care. However, quality assurance was carried out in an informal and ad hoc way. The service did not have a plan to guide them around measuring the quality of service delivery. We heard that the service was taking action however there was no service improvement plan which helped them to prioritise improvement work and monitor progress. We shared our self-evaluation guidance with the manager and felt assured that they were in a good position to develop this within the service. We will check on progress at future inspections (see area for improvement 1).

## Areas for improvement

1. The manager should ensure that effective quality assurance and audit processes are completed regularly.

Where areas of concern or deficits are identified, there should be a clear action plan with evidence available to demonstrate progress made and the outcomes achieved.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23).

## What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

### Areas for improvement

#### Previous area for improvement 1

In order to build on the good outcomes for people experiencing care and develop more person centred care practices, the service should review and develop a training plan for the staff to complete administration of medication training.

This training should include:

- assisting with medication
- administration of medication
- awareness of aids to support administration of medication
- recording of medication once administered.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes'. (HSCS 3.14).

**This area for improvement was made on 18 October 2021.**

#### Action taken since then

At the last inspection, in December 2023, it was noted that the service was responsive to our feedback on the further development of documents, policies and procedural guidance and demonstrated an understanding of how to support the assessment and administration of services users' medication support needs. Staff training was ongoing and the service plans to provide support to people with their medication on an incremental basis to support staff learning and assessment of competence. This area for improvement was continued to ensure that improvements are embedded within the service and result in positive outcomes for people.

At this inspection, we observed that the manager had undertaken medication training so that they could train and provide support to staff. All staff were trained in medication administration and annual refresher training had been carried out.

We observed medication administration during shadow visits and noted that there was limited information and guidance on when staff are to offer assistance or administer medication. We made a new area for improvement within 'How well do we support people's wellbeing?'

**This area for improvement has been met.**

## Previous area for improvement 2

In order to continue to ensure people experience a good level of care and the service is responsive to change, the provider should build on the existing quality assurance systems.

This should be in relation to capturing people's experiences and feedback.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes'. (HSCS 4.19).

**This area for improvement was made on 18 October 2021.**

### Action taken since then

At the last inspection, in December 2023, it was reported that the service had a range of quality assurance measures in place with plans in place for further quality assurance activity to capture people's experience and feedback, to ensure that people benefit from a culture of continuous improvement. This area for improvement was continued to ensure that improvements were embedded within the service and resulting in positive outcomes for people.

At this inspection, we observed good progress in obtaining people's feedback on the service and the manager had taken action to address people's experiences and feedback.

We assessed that this area for improvement has been met, however observed limited quality assurance recording within the service. We have reflected on this within 'How good is our staff team?' and made a new area for improvement.

**This area for improvement has been met.**

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).



## Detailed evaluations

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	4 - Good
1.3 People's health and wellbeing benefits from their care and support	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
3.3 Staffing arrangements are right and staff work well together	4 - Good

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Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

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